

# caregiver infant interactions

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- A person's first attachment is often established with their primary caregiver during infancy.
- Caregivers vary in sensitivity / responsiveness - not all infants attach to caregivers in the same way.
- babies have meaningful social interactions with caregivers + it's believed these interactions have important functions for the child's social development.

## reciprocity

- **reciprocity**: one person responds to the other.
- babies have 'alert phase' signalling they're ready for interaction. Mothers typically pick up on these + respond  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the time (Feldman + Eidelman 2007)
- At around 3 months, interaction becomes more frequent + involves close attention to verbal signals / facial expressions (Feldman 2007)
- **reciprocity**: a person responds to the other + elicits a response out of them.
- babies take an active role. Trad. views of childhood have seen babies as passive  $\rightarrow$  receiving care from the adult.
- both mother + baby can initiate interactions + take turns in doing so. Brazelton (1975) described this as a dance e.g. baby pointing + mum responding by looking.

## interactional synchrony

- **interactional synchrony** = primary caregiver + infant carry out the same act at the same time. Their actions mirror each other
- Meltzoff + Moore (1977) observed interactional synchrony in infants as young as 2 weeks old.
- Adult displayed 1 of 3 facial expressions / 1 of 3 distinctive gestures + child's response was filmed / identified by observers.
- An association was made between the expression / gesture of the adult and the action of the child.
- Isabella et al (1989) observed 30 mothers together + assessed the degree of synchrony / quality of mother + infant attachment. Found high levels of synchrony were associated with better quality mother + infant attachment (emotional intensity of the relationship).

## evaluation

- **Strength**: mother + infant procedures are well controlled. They were filmed, meaning fine details of their ~~feeding~~ behaviour can be recorded and analysed later. Also, babies don't know they're being observed, so their behaviour does not change in response to observation  $\rightarrow$  studies have good validity.
- **Limitation**: research into mother + infant interactions is socially sensitive because it suggests children may be disadvantaged by certain child-rearing practices. E.g. mothers who return to work shortly after their child is born restricts the opportunities of gaining interactional synchrony  $\rightarrow$  suggests mothers shouldn't return to work soon = implications for the economy.
- **Limitation**: Many studies observing mother + infant interactions have shown some interaction patterns. Guratier (2003) however says what is being observed is mere hand movements / changes in expression  $\rightarrow$  behaviours seen in mother + infant interactions may not have a special meaning.